



afterdeployment.org

Wellness resources for the military community.

BRIEFING: PREPARING FOR REUNION

BRIEFING TOPICS

- COMMON FAMILY / SOLDIER EXPERIENCES FOLLOWING REDEPLOYMENT.
 - SIGNS OF ADJUSTMENT PROBLEMS.
 - ASSESSMENT PROGRAMS.
 - RECOMMENDATIONS.

WHAT IS NORMAL?

FAMILIES

IT IS **COMMON** AND **NORMAL** FOR FAMILIES TO EXPERIENCE COPING DIFFICULTIES DURING THE PREDEPLOYMENT, DEPLOYMENT, AND REDEPLOYMENT PHASES OF ADJUSTMENT.

SOLDIERS

IT IS **COMMON** AND **NORMAL** FOR SOLDIERS TO EXPERIENCE EMOTIONAL AFTERSHOCKS WHEN THEY HAVE WITNESSED OR BEEN INVOLVED IN HIGHLY STRESSFUL AND LIFE THREATENING SITUATIONS.

FACTS & MYTHS

FACT:

MOST FAMILIES ARE AFFECTED BY A DEPLOYMENT.

MYTH:

EVERY FAMILY REPORTS ADJUSTMENT PROBLEMS
REQUIRING PROFESSIONAL SERVICES.

FACT:

MOST SOLDIERS ARE AFFECTED BY THEIR DEPLOYMENT.

MYTH:

EVERY SOLDIER EXPERIENCES CLINICALLY SIGNIFICANT
PROBLEMS OR SYMPTOMS AFTER DEPLOYING.

BACK HOME: COMMON SOLDIER THOUGHTS

- “I FEEL EMOTIONALLY LETDOWN.”
- “NO ONE REALLY UNDERSTANDS WHAT I’VE BEEN THROUGH.”
- “MY FRIENDS SEEM DIFFERENT.”
- “OTHER PEOPLE’S CONCERNs SEEM PETTY NOW.”
- “I FEEL LIKE A STRANGER AT HOME.”
- “DID MY FAMILY MISS ME?”
- “SHOULD I TELL MY SPOUSE/FRIENDS ABOUT MY EXPERIENCES?”
- “HOW WILL MY CHILDREN RESPOND TO ME?”

BACK HOME: COMMON FAMILY THOUGHTS

- “DID I HANDLE THINGS THE RIGHT WAY?”
- “WILL HE/SHE APPRECIATE HOW WELL I MANAGED THE FAMILY?”
- “I’VE GOTTEN GOOD AT SOME THINGS THAT I DON’T WANT TO GIVE UP.”
- “SHOULD I ASK HIM ABOUT HIS EXPERIENCES?”
- “HE SPENDS MORE TIME WITH HIS ‘COMBAT BUDDIES’ THAN WITH HIS FAMILY.”
- “WHEN WILL HE/SHE BE MORE LIKE HIM/HERSELF?”
- “WHEN WILL HE/SHE DEPLOY AGAIN?”

THE “WHEN” OF POST DEPLOYMENT SOLDIER STRESS

SOMETIMES THE STRESS REACTIONS
APPEAR IMMEDIATELY. SOMETIMES
THEY APPEAR HOURS, DAYS, WEEKS,
OR EVEN MONTHS LATER.

THE STRESS REACTIONS MAY
LAST A FEW DAYS, A FEW WEEKS, OR
EVEN A FEW MONTHS, AND SOMETIMES
LONGER.

FAMILY STRESS

FAMILY STRESS CAN OCCUR BEFORE
A DEPLOYMENT, DURING A
DEPLOYMENT, OR FOLLOWING
REDEPLOYMENT.

Adjustment Problems

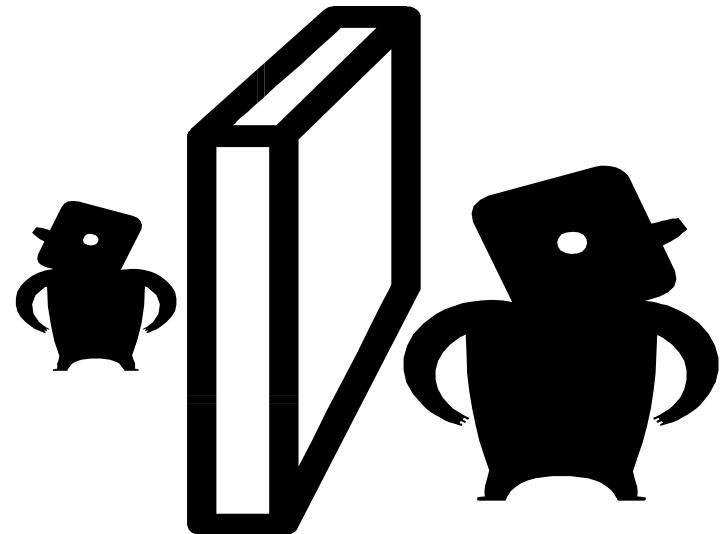
Feeling Depressed



Avoiding People / Interests Previously Enjoyed



SELF-ISOLATION



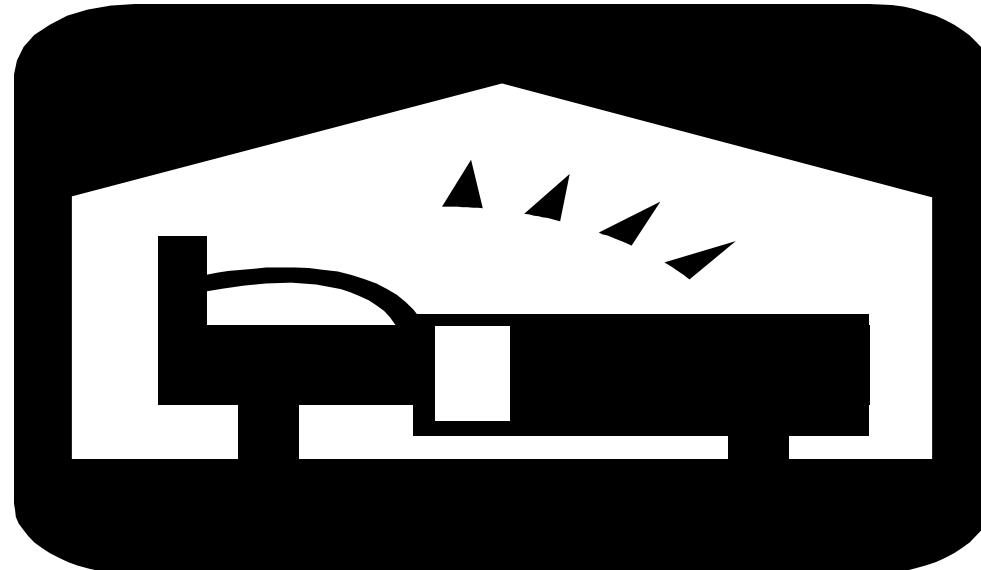
ANXIETY / PANIC ATTACKS



Feeling Overcautious About Security or Safety



Trouble Sleeping / Nightmares



QUICK to ANGER





ROAD RAGE

EMOTIONS ARE NUMB



THOUGHTS OF SUICIDE



INCREASED ALCOHOL USE



**SOLDIER: GUILTY for SURVIVING DEPLOYMENT;
GUILTY for NOT STILL BEING THERE**



LOUD NOISES



Feeling Uncomfortable In Crowds



Relationship Problems



PHYSICAL INJURY





GAMBLING

NEGATIVE COPING

EXCESSIVE BEHAVIORS:

- ALCOHOL USE
- GAMBLING
- VIDEO GAMING
- FIXATION ON THE NEWS / WAR MOVIES
- OUT OF CONTROL SPENDING

CHANGE

Deploying / Redeploying
Represents A Significant
CHANGE in Life Conditions.

ADAPTABILITY

"The Survivors in this Life seem to be those who are **ADAPTABLE to CHANGE.**"

- *Cambridge International Dictionary of English*

WHAT IS “ADAPTATION”?

**“TO ADAPT” Means
“To Adjust to New Conditions.”**

ADAPTIVE DEPLOYMENT SOLDIER BEHAVIOR

- Being constantly on guard (hypervigilant).
- Getting little sleep.
- Recalling events repeatedly.
- Emotional numbing.
- Irritability.
- Heightened response to loud noises.

THESE BEHAVIORS MAXIMIZED SURVIVAL DURING DEPLOYMENT, BUT ARE DISRUPTIVE IN GARRISON

ADAPTIVE DEPLOYMENT FAMILY BEHAVIOR

- Solving Problems Alone.
- Feeling Overcautious.
- Numbing of Emotions.
- Avoiding Social Outlets/Time for Self.
- Multi-tasking to Point of Exhaustion.

ADAPTIVE VS. MALADAPTIVE

WHAT'S ADAPTIVE IN ONE
CONTEXT OR SET OF
CIRCUMSTANCES MAY BE
MALADAPTIVE IN ANOTHER
CONTEXT OR SET OF
CIRCUMSTANCES.

WHEN IS THE PROBLEM 'MALADAPTIVE'

- IF IRRITABILITY/ANGER PERSISTS.
- IF YOU FEEL UNSAFE OR HAVE CONCERN ABOUT THE SAFETY OF FAMILY MEMBERS.
- IF EXCESSIVE BEHAVIORS PERSIST.
 - THOUGHTS OF SUICIDE.
- IF NIGHTMARES/INSOMNIA PERSISTS.
- IF MOOD REMAINS FLAT OR DEPRESSED OR CONSTANTLY ANXIOUS.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- WHAT DID YOU LEARN ABOUT YOURSELF DURING THE PERIOD OF DEPLOYMENT?
 - FOR EXAMPLE, CAN YOU NAME A SKILL THAT YOU LEARNED DURING THE DEPLOYMENT?
- DO YOU HAVE:
 - A SENSE OF ACHIEVEMENT?
 - GREATER SELF-CONFIDENCE?
 - MORE SELF-ESTEEM?
 - IMPROVED DECISION-MAKING ABILITY?
 - INCREASED APPRECIATION OF YOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM?

IDENTIFIED NEEDS



Over 20% of returning Service Members experience:

- ⇒ Traumatic deployment memories
- ⇒ Sleep problems
- ⇒ Stress
- ⇒ Depression
- ⇒ Anger
- ⇒ Substance abuse
- ⇒ Relationship issues

BARRIERS TO CARE

While post-deployment adjustment problems are **normal...**

Service members do not seek face-to-face care because of personal and/or situational **barriers...**

...And the **stigma** associated with receiving care.



TROUBLE ADJUSTING TO HOME LIFE?

GET SOME HELP afterdeployment.org
A Wellness Resource for the Military Community

Adjusting to life after deployment can be difficult for service members, families and veterans.
afterdeployment.org provides self-care solutions for common post-deployment problems.

POST-DEPLOYMENT SURVEY

- POST DEPLOYMENT SURVEY ADMINISTERED TO ALL REDEPLOYING SOLDIERS.
- THE SURVEY TAPS A WIDE RANGE OF HEALTH-RELATED ISSUES.
- EVERY SOLDIER TAKES THE SURVEY.
- ON THE DAY OF THE SURVEY, EVERY SOLDIER HAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO TALK PRIVATELY WITH A CHAPLAIN, A SOCIAL WORKER, OR A PSYCHOLOGIST.

SUGGESTIONS - 1

- Go Slowly - Don't Try to Make up for Lost Time All At Once.
- Recognize That Closeness May be Awkward at Times.
- Expect that the Soldier May Seem a Bit Different in the Beginning.

SUGGESTIONS - 2

- Consider the Following:
 - What's Different About Him/Her?
 - What's Different About Me?
 - Identify the Positive, Including Reaffirming Positive Traits.
 - Voice Concerns In a Way that Doesn't Accuse or Threaten.

SUGGESTIONS - 3

- It's O.K. to Ask About the Deployment – But You May Not Get a Response Right Away.
- Avoid Making Sudden Big Life Changes.
- Reassure Your Children – Change Often Frightens Them.
- Try to See Things From His/Her Point of View.
- Have Confidence that Things Will Return to Normalcy in a Few Months.
- Talk About Your Experiences – Talk is the Most Healing Medicine.

RESOURCES

- UNIT CHAIN OF COMMAND
- UNIT CHAPLAIN
- SOCIAL WORK SERVICES/CARE MANAGERS
- BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CLINIC
- SOLDIER READINESS SERVICE
- MEDICAL PROVIDERS
- MILITARYONESOURCE

FAMILY WEBSITE RESOURCES

- ***afterdeployment.org:*** www.afterdeployment.org
- **Army Community Service, Fort Lewis:**
<http://www.lewis.army.mil/dpca/acs/>
- **Courage to Care:** <http://www.couragetocareforme.org/offline/>
- **Deployment Health Clinical Center:**
<http://www.pdhealth.mil/main.asp>
- **FRG Operations and Spouse Assistance:**
<http://www.armyfrg.org/skins/frg/home.aspx?AllowSSL=true>
- **My Army Life Too:**
<http://www.myarmylifetoo.com/skins/malt/home.aspx?mode=user&AllowSSL=true>
- **National Center for PTSD:** <http://www.ncptsd.va.gov/>